

From: Jeff Ramsey
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/11/01 11:36am
Subject: The Red Hat Proposal

My name is Jeff Ramsey. I am an MIS Administrator for a fencing manufacturing company in Washington State. I believe by allowing Microsoft to 'give' it's software to our nation's 14,000 poorest schools, you are only locking those schools into an ongoing license agreement in which Microsoft would then have the opportunity to change some of the company's software standards, causing the schools to need to purchase more MS software to stay compliant with the rest of the world. The proposal made by Red Hat CEO Matthew Szulik to have MS put that money into hardware for the schools, and use Red Hat's Linux software for free is a better bargain from all angles. Forcing MS to give its software to 14,000 schools is not a punishment because it enables MS to continue its monopolistic ideas by way of making upgrades and security patches cost more than they should. Some of those upgrades will be necessary for the schools to continue to operate computer labs and classes in a secure environment. So instead of making MS go without dinner, you will be adding 14,000 more schools to the pot.

The proposal from Red Hat to give the 14,000 schools Red Hat Linux software for free and force MS to either give the schools money or computer hardware is a win-win situation. Here is some of what that proposal includes:

1. Microsoft redirects the value of their proposed software donation to the purchase of additional hardware for the school districts. This would increase the number of computers available under the original proposal from 200,000 to more than one million, and would increase the number of systems per school from approximately 14 to at least 70.
2. Red Hat, Inc. will provide free of charge the open-source Red Hat Linux operating system, office applications and associated capabilities to any school system in the United States. Not just the 14,000 poorest schools, but any of them.
3. Red Hat will provide online support for the software through the Red Hat Network.
4. Unlike the Microsoft proposal, which has a five-year time limit at which point schools would have to pay Microsoft to renew their licenses and upgrade the software, the Red Hat proposal has no time limit. Red Hat will provide software upgrades through the Red Hat Network online distribution channel.

My opinion in the matter is simple: Allowing Microsoft to give out its own products to schools is not a punishment for the company, it's an investment. I sincerely hope that you will take Red Hat Inc.'s proposal into careful consideration.

Thank you for your time,
Jeff Ramsey
MIS Administrator
Tubafor Mill, Inc.